

# 12.0 - Implementation

## 12.1 - Introduction



The City of Grand Rapids Master Plan is made up of graphic and narrative land

use recommendations that function as benchmarks and provide basic guidelines for making coordinated community development decisions. Completion and adoption of the plan is not the end of the planning process. Plan implementation must be achieved over an extended period through the cooperative efforts of the public, private and nonprofit sectors.





*“This city was a palace once. And there were no kings or queens or dukes, but only citizens, beholden to each other. And this city can be a palace again.”*

*Mayor John Pappas in [City Hall](#), Castle Rock Entertainment, (1996).*

This City of Grand Rapids Master Plan was created by over 3,000 citizens of Grand Rapids in 250 meetings over a one and a half year period in collaboration with a Master Plan Committee of thirty members, the City Planning Staff, and the consultant team. It represents our hopes and visions for the future of our community.

In large areas of the city, citizens have chosen a future that values traditional, walkable neighborhoods and mixed-use commercial districts; as well as a recovery of the viable transportation choices that used to exist. At the same time, the vision embraces a city in sustainable harmony with the natural environment. At first sight, a concern for the natural environment may appear inconsistent with an urban vision, but a nationwide consensus is emerging that the key to preservation of the natural environment lies in revitalization of the American city. Not less important to our citizens is their concern for the educational, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of community, along with a desire and respect for the true diversity that enriches us all. It is important to acknowledge our community values that shaped this Master Plan as we strive towards its implementation.

This chapter provides implementation recommendations to achieve the promise of the Master Plan. It is presented in three sections.

### Action Plan

The Action Plan identifies, assigns and proposes a schedule for major next steps to ensure that the momentum achieved in formulating the Master Plan is continued in initiating its implementation.

### Action Plan - Theme Matrix

This matrix shows how each of the Action Plan items relates to the objectives and policies of the Master Plan’s seven theme chapters. The matrix demonstrates the continued integration of themes in the implementation phase.

## Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

Despite the application of a wide-range of plan implementation techniques, institutional barriers may limit its effectiveness. Strategies for overcoming a number of barriers are described.

## 12.2 - Action Plan

Twelve action items recommended to implement the Master Plan are found in *Figure 12.a - Short-Term Implementation Action Plan - Page 160*. The following elements are included for each action item.

- **Assignment** - The party(ies) responsible for undertaking the activity.
- **Action Summary** - A brief description of the activities to be performed.
- **Timing** - Recommendations for activity start and completion dates.
- **Priority.**

All Action Plan items can contribute to the success of the Master Plan; however, the Master Plan Committee ranked the items in the order of their relative importance:

### Tier I: Top Priorities (Critical)

- Zoning Ordinance and Map Audit and Update
- Information Outreach
- City Department and Program Action Priorities
- Citywide Studies

### Tier II: Intermediate Priorities (Essential)

- Neighborhood and Area-Specific Plans
- Design Assistance Center

- Capital Improvements Program Development
- State Legislation
- Master Plan Evaluation

### Tier III: Lower Ranking Priorities (Desirable)

- Guidelines Workbook
- Growth Management Program
- Economic Summit

The activities included in each action item will require a continuing process of public collaboration, according to the following principles. Those impacted by an action item should be involved early on in the process.

- Community involvement should occur prior to reaching decisions.
- Partnering agreements that articulate a process for resolving disputes should be encouraged to gain commitment by the participants.

A process of public collaboration can help to overcome potential limitations on time, money, resources and administrative capacity that may occur as implementation occurs. Actively soliciting the support of private industry and foundations can help to overcome limitations in public sector resources.

### 12.2.1 - Zoning Ordinance and Map Audit and Update

The zoning code and map are essential tools in implementing the Master Plan. The local zoning code divides a community into land use districts and establishes building restrictions limiting the height, lot area coverage and other dimensions of structures that are permitted within each district. At the time that the City Commission adopts a zoning code, it

approves a zoning map overlaid on a street or parcel map of the community. It is possible to identify the use district within which any parcel of land is located, the uses that are permitted and the restrictions that apply to the land. Regulations in different kinds of districts may be different; however, regulations within the same district must be consistent throughout the community.

The city's current zoning ordinance (text and map) has not been comprehensively updated for many years. It is recommended that appropriate text and zoning district map amendments be pursued following a technical audit of the zoning code to compare it with the objectives of the Master Plan.

Particular attention should be given to incorporating flexibility in the zoning regulations, such as floating zones, planned unit developments, overlay zoning, incentive (bonus) zoning, and typology coding.

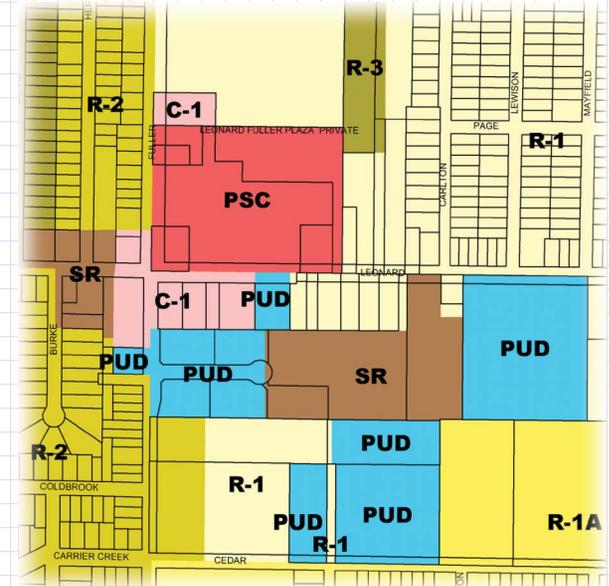
### 12.2.2 - Information and Outreach

As noted by the Urban Land Institute:

*The planning and development business is much more complicated than it used to be. No longer is it possible to consider the public and private sectors as independent actors. Tight budgets have caused public agencies to act simultaneously as regulators of and partners in private development; interest groups have become stronger and more sophisticated, and the diversity of participants has increased. Clearly, it's a new ball game for developers, local governments, and citizens.<sup>1</sup>*

To promote a broad understanding of Master Plan recommendations, it will be necessary to meet with:

- neighborhood and business associations;
- private sector interests (lenders, developers, major property owners, etc.);



The zoning code and map are essential tools in implementing the Master Plan.

<sup>1</sup> ULI – The Urban Land Institute with Program for Community Problem Solving. *Pulling Together: A Planning and Development Consensus – Building Manual*. Washington D.C.: ULI – The Urban Land Institute, 1994, pp. 11 and 12.

Figure 12.a - Short-Term Implementation Action Plan

Action Item	Assignment(s)	Action Summary	Timing
<b>Zoning Ordinance and Map Audit and Update</b> <i>(See Section 12.2.1 - Page 159)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Planning Department</li> <li>• City Planning Commission</li> <li>• Zoning Board of Appeals</li> <li>• City Commission</li> </ul>	Conduct review of city zoning ordinance and map to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prioritize amendments needed;</li> <li>• prepare amendments with citizen advisory committee input;</li> <li>• conduct community reviews; and</li> <li>• adopt amendments.</li> </ul>	January 2003–December 2004
<b>Information and Outreach</b> <i>(See Section 12.2.2 - Page 159)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Planning Department</li> <li>• Neighborhood and Business Associations</li> <li>• Foundations</li> </ul>	Promote understanding of Master Plan recommendations by meeting with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• neighborhood and business associations;</li> <li>• private sector interests (lenders, developers, major property owners, etc.);</li> <li>• non-profit &amp; community-based organizations;</li> <li>• institutions;</li> <li>• city department and program staff;</li> <li>• neighboring jurisdictions, County, GVMC, Region 8 representatives; and</li> <li>• Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT).</li> </ul>	Starting with Master Plan adoption (October 2002); ongoing
<b>City Department and Program Action Priorities</b> <i>(See Section 12.2.3 - Page 162)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Manager</li> <li>• City Departments and appropriate programs</li> </ul>	Ask City Manager to direct each department or program to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• define 3 action steps (with work plan and timetable) to implement Master Plan recommendations; incorporate these initiatives into the annual update of the 3-Year City Strategic Plan and to report on progress and additional initiatives annually. Review and coordinate projects and funding with MDOT;</li> <li>• review policies for consistency with Master Plan objectives; and</li> <li>• review ordinances and codes for consistency with Master Plan objectives and propose appropriate amendments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For November 2002 3-Year City Strategic Plan update; annual</li> <li>• Annual November 2002–January 2003</li> </ul>
<b>Citywide Studies</b> <i>(See Section 12.2.4 - Page 163)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Departments</li> <li>• Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP)</li> <li>• Stakeholder Groups</li> <li>• Foundations</li> </ul>	Prioritize and undertake citywide studies, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historic Preservation Plan;</li> <li>• Environmentally Sensitive Areas Inventory;</li> <li>• Bikeway and Pedestrian Facilities Plan; and</li> <li>• Fixed Route Transit Plan.</li> </ul>	January 2003–June 2004

Tier I - Critical

Figure 12.a - Short-Term Implementation Action Plan

	Action Item	Assignment(s)	Action Summary	Timing
Tier II - Essential	Neighborhood and Area-Specific Plans (See Section 12.2.5 - Page 164)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood and Business Associations</li> <li>• City Planning Department</li> <li>• Community Development Department</li> <li>• City Design Team</li> <li>• Design Assistance Center</li> <li>• Foundations</li> <li>• Economic Development Department</li> <li>• Foundations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop criteria/priorities for planning efforts, including the provision of technical assistance, project funding and implementation techniques in consultation with neighborhood, business, property owner and developer representatives.</li> <li>• “Pilot” and test the proposed process; refine.</li> <li>• Undertake additional planning efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2002–January 2003</li> <li>• 2003</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
	Design Assistance Center (See Section 12.2.6 - Page 164)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GVMC</li> <li>• Foundations</li> </ul>	<p>Explore the potential for establishing a DAC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• solicit funding;</li> <li>• identify host organization; and</li> <li>• organize DAC composition and assistance protocol.</li> </ul>	November 2002–April 2003
	Capital Improvements Program Development (See Section 12.2.7 - Page 165)	City Budget Office	<p>Update CIP process including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning Commission participation;</li> <li>• staff training; and</li> <li>• program plan criteria and forms.</li> </ul> <p>Make the Master Plan a basic reference in proposing and prioritizing CIP projects.</p>	November 2002–October 2004
	State Legislation (See Section 12.2.8 - Page 165)	City Legislative Liaison	Propose and lobby for needed state legislation (e.g., design review authority, demolition assessments, impact fees, transfer of development rights (TDR), concurrency requirements).	January 2003; ongoing
	Master Plan Evaluation (See Section 12.2.9 - Page 166)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Planning Department</li> <li>• City Planning Commission</li> <li>• Zoning Board of Appeals</li> <li>• Citizens</li> </ul>	Develop measures, criteria and tools for Master Plan evaluation and maintenance. Prepare annual report on Master Plan implementation progress and priorities. Assess accountability. Evaluate consistency between Plan objectives and policies. Update the Plan through official action every five years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2002–October 2003</li> <li>• Annual report/review</li> <li>• Five year renewal/update by 2007</li> </ul>
Tier III - Desirable	Guidelines Workbook (See Section 12.2.10 - Page 169)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Planning Department</li> <li>• Planning Commission</li> <li>• City Design Team</li> <li>• Foundations</li> </ul>	Prepare comprehensive design guidelines workbook addressing neighborhood character types and business areas.	January 2003–June 2004; ongoing additions and revisions
	Growth Management Program (See Section 12.2.11 - Page 170)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grand Valley Metro Council</li> <li>• West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA)</li> </ul>	Carry out GVMC Blueprint II planning process.	Ongoing
	Economic Summit (See Section 12.2.12 - Page 170)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Right Place Program</li> <li>• Urban Redevelopment Council</li> <li>• Sustainable Business Forum</li> <li>• Economic Development Department</li> <li>• Neighborhood Business Alliance</li> </ul>	Consider holding annual Economic Development Summit to address on-going regional issues affecting private investment decisions (infrastructure, quality of life, funding assistance, etc.).	November 2002–January 2003; annual

## Excerpt from State Municipal Planning Act

The Planning Commission shall make and approve a master plan for the physical development of the municipality, including any areas outside of its boundaries which, in the Commission's judgment, bear relation to the planning of the municipality. The Planning Commission may meet with other governmental planning commissions to deliberate.

The municipal plan, with the accompanying maps, plats, charts, and descriptive matter shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the development of the territory, including, but not limited to, all of the following:

- (a) The general location, character, and extent of streets, viaducts, subways, bridges, waterways, floodplains, water fronts, boulevards, parkways, playgrounds, and open spaces.
- (b) The general location of public buildings and other public property.
- (c) The general location and extent of public utilities and terminals, whether publicly or privately owned or operated, for water, light, sanitation, transportation, communication, power, and other purposes.
- (d) The removal, relocation, widening, narrowing, vacating, abandonment, change of use, or extension of any of the ways, grounds, open spaces, buildings, property, utilities, or terminals described in subdivision (a), (b), or (c).
- (e) The general location, character, layout, and extent of community centers and neighborhood units.
- (f) The general character, extent, and layout of the replanning and redevelopment of blighted areas.
- (g) A zoning plan for the control of the height, area, bulk, location, and use of buildings and premises.

The municipal plan shall address land use issues and may project 20 years or more into the future. The plan shall include maps, plats, charts, and descriptive, explanatory, and other related matter and shall show the planning commission's recommendations for the physical development of the municipality.

- foundations, non-profits, community-based and faith-based organizations;
- institutions;
- city departments and program staff;
- neighboring communities; and
- public organizations (Grand Valley Metro Council, Region 8, etc.) and public agencies (for example, the Michigan Department of Transportation).

The Municipal Planning Act (State PA 285 of 1931) empowers the Planning Commission to lead this critical activity. In addition, amendments to the Municipal Planning Act adopted in 2002 require coordination of planning activities among neighboring municipalities through consultation prior to plan adoption and by making copies of adopted master plans available. These efforts are designed to lead to continuity in planning policies among communities.

PA 285 also provides that the proposed plan be shared with each public utility company and railroad company owning or operating a public utility or railroad within the municipality, and any government entity, that registers its name and address for this purpose. Specific activities which should be considered as part of this Action Plan item include:

- creation of a "speakers bureau" comprised of Planning Commission, Master Plan Committee, neighborhood and business association members who can be called upon to represent the Master Plan at specific outreach events;
- broad distribution of an executive summary document/poster that quickly communicates Master Plan objectives and recommendations.

## 12.2.3 - City Department and Program Action Priorities

Two activities are recommended as part of this Action Plan item.

- Encourage city departments to identify initiatives that support the Master Plan and can be incorporated into the annual update of the city's 3-Year Strategic Plan.
- Review city policies and codes for consistency with Master Plan objectives, including the goal of sustainable development; and prepare necessary amendments.

### Strategic Planning

A strategic plan is a series of detailed actions and programs used to address major community opportunities and problems in the short term. Strategic planning helps communities become more effective in implementing planning objectives because it identifies specific actions that will be undertaken by a certain date, who will undertake them and at what cost.<sup>2</sup>

*The city's 3-Year Strategic Plan is updated annually. It provides an ideal vehicle for focusing the attention of city departments on Master Plan recommendations by asking each department (and program) to identify specific initiatives that will help to implement plan recommendations for incorporation into the Strategic Plan update. These initiatives should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and trackable. Such a process could be initiated at the request of the City Manager and institutionalized as an administrative practice in Grand Rapids.*

<sup>2</sup> Planning and Zoning Center, *Community Planning Handbook: Tools and techniques for Guiding Community Change*, Michigan Society of Planning Officials, 1991, pg. 7.

## City Policy and Code Review

Many communities have found that their own development policies and codes can actually work against their efforts to achieve master plan objectives. This can be especially true with respect to the principles of Smart Growth. For example, local policies often promulgate inflexible rules that result in excessively wide residential streets, expansive parking lots and mass clearing and grading of forested areas. At the same time, local codes often give developers little or no incentive to conserve natural areas. Consequently, communities need to re-evaluate their local codes and policies to ensure development decisions that are consistent with master plan recommendations.

Model development regulations affecting residential streets and parking lots, lot development and the conservation of natural resources prepared by the Center for Watershed Protection (Maryland) in their landmark 1998 publication *Better Site Design: A Handbook for Changing Development Rules in Your Community* are presented in *Supplement A-2* to assist in an assessment of current city policies and requirements, and the need to amend them.

This audit may lead to changes to regulations governing the subdividing and dividing of land within the city. Local authority for such regulations is provided by the Land Division Act (PA 288 of 1967) and Condominium Act (PA of 1978).

- **Land Division Act** - The Land Division Act (formerly and more commonly known as the Subdivision Control Act) is the state law permitting a seller to record a plat of land by dividing into blocks and lots (*Please refer to Supplement A-2*). This permits the sale of land to be made by reference to a recorded plat (rather than in metes and bounds) making taxes easier to assess and collect. The act also describes the process and requirements for the “replatting” of

property – often a necessity when redevelopment is to be encouraged in already developed areas.

- **Condominium Regulation** - Separate legislation governs the regulation of condominium development – a circumstance involving a single real property parcel with all the unit owners having a right in common to use the common elements with separate ownership confined to the individual units that are serially designated.

*Initially, condominium developments were of the apartment variety and subject to local multifamily zoning regulations. Subsequently, single-family detached condominium development emerged as a housing option. As a result, local zoning requirements are necessary to ensure that site condominiums are built to the same standards as single-family subdivisions.*

## 12.2.4 - Citywide Studies

The master plan process has focused upon providing an overall recommended pattern of future land use for the city. At the same time, it has identified a number of citywide studies that will be important for the plan’s successful implementation. It is recommended that the city pursue the preparation of additional studies:

- Historic Preservation Plan
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas Inventory and Plan
- Bikeway and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- Fixed Route Transit Plan

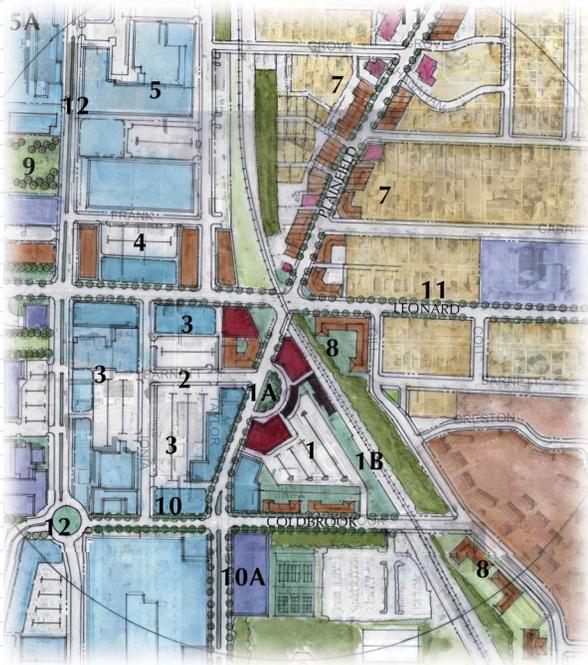
These studies, once prepared, should be adopted as amendments to the Master Plan.



*Condominium developments contain common elements requiring unique development regulations.*



*A Bikeway and Pedestrian Facilities Plan is recommended.*



Plainfield Avenue and Leonard Street Special Study.

## 12.2.5 - Neighborhood and Area-Specific Plans

Neighborhood planning is authorized by the Municipal Planning Act and can provide a finer grain of analysis than is available through a citywide master plan. Area-specific plans may be prepared for a block, a neighborhood, a business district or a larger area. They may be undertaken in response to a development proposal or as a proactive planning study.

A specific work plan should be used in preparing a neighborhood or area-specific study such as discussed in *Chapter 11 - Area-Specific Plans - Page 151*. There are myriad of sites within Grand Rapids well suited for detailed study and planning. Given this competition, it is recommended that this Action Plan item include the following steps:

- develop criteria/priorities for planning efforts, including technical and funding assistance that may be provided by the city and other sources;
- “pilot” and test the proposed process and refine the process as necessary; and
- undertake additional planning studies.

## 12.2.6 - Design Assistance Center

Design assistance is often needed to develop neighborhood and area-specific plans and guidelines, and can be helpful in illustrating how plans and guidelines can be translated into more detailed development decisions. Often, the need for design assistance (in both area-specific planning and design review) is greater than the city staff and budget alone can provide. Communities are increasingly relying on the assistance of an independent design assessment center to expand city staff capabilities.

A design assessment center (DAC) is an independent organization having the expertise to provide

technical assistance on design issues on an as-needed basis. As a non-profit entity, the DAC may be housed within a university or operate as a division of a government department; it can be financially supported by universities; local, county and regional government; foundations and/or the development community or it may be staffed by volunteer design professionals. A DAC may:

- mediate disputes between the applicant(s), municipality and affected neighborhood; and
- provide technical advice and/or recommendations to neighborhood groups or the city on design related matters.

There are many prototypes in existence. One example is the Design Center of the Chattanooga-Hamilton (Tennessee) Regional Planning Commission. It was established in 1990 as a division of the planning agency. It is staffed by employees of the planning agency, the River Valley Company and a consultant from the University of Tennessee School of Architecture. Over the past decade the Chattanooga Design Center has had a significant impact as a catalyst and facilitator in encouraging reinvestment – and quality design – in the downtown area.

It is recommended that the potential for establishing a DAC be explored and an organizational strategy be completed. Specific Action Plan tasks are:

- explore potential organizational structures;
- identify potential funding sources;
- identify a host organization; and
- organize DAC composition and assistance protocol and technology requirements.

Some cities have started using virtual reality simulation as an aide in providing design review assistance. These computer-generated images depict the design proposal within the context of its setting. The City

of Birmingham, Michigan currently utilizes this technique to evaluate the design character of buildings proposed for their downtown. Computer Assisted Design (CAD) drawings are electronically provided by the applicant at the time site plan approval application is made. This information is then manipulated by staff using vendor provided software to create an “as-built” image of the proposed project at its intended location.

### 12.2.7 - Capital Improvements Programming

A capital expenditure can be defined as any outlay that produces benefits in periods beyond the current accounting period. A Capital Improvements Program (CIP) establishes a formal mechanism for consideration and implementation of capital expenditures covering a period of six years, with the first year representing the current capital budget.

A CIP can allow improvement proposals to be tested against set policies and/or goals, objectives and plans of the community. In fact, cities, villages and townships having an adopted master plan under authority of the Municipal Planning Act (PA 285 of 1931, as amended) must annually prepare a CIP. Section 9 of PA 285 reads, in part:

*For the purpose of furthering the desirable future development of the municipality under the master plan the city planning commission, after the commission shall have adopted a master plan, shall prepare coordinated and comprehensive programs of public structures and improvements. The commission shall annually prepare such a program for the ensuing six years...*

There are many ways to prepare a CIP. A seven (7) step process is outlined in *Supplement A-5*. The preparation of a CIP using this sequence is recommended to program specific projects recommended in an earlier chapter of this report. Examples include the improvement of 28<sup>th</sup> Street, improving “connections” to the riverfront by extending 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the extension of Seward Avenue north to Ann Street, or returning the rapids to the Grand River.

### 12.2.8 - State Legislation

Amendments to state enabling law are required for the city to apply new techniques or install new requirements for development projects, in a manner that benefits Master Plan implementation. It is recommended that the city evaluate the need for state legislation supporting:

- **Clear Design Review Authority** - Michigan courts have accepted the validity of aesthetic regulations under the police power, but in a somewhat more limited way. In *Wolverine Sign Works v. Bloomfield hills*, 275 Mich 205; 271 NW 823 (1937), the court ruled “aesthetics may be an incident but cannot be a moving factor.”
- **Demolition Assessments** - Statutory authority under the City-Village Zoning Act does not exist, which requires a developer (as a precondition to site redevelopment activity) to document the need for, or measures to mitigate the impact of, building demolition.
- **Impact Fees** - Authorization to assess charges against newly-developing property that attempts to cover the cost incurred by a local government in providing public facilities required to serve the new development is necessary to help redirect growth to urbanized areas and away from greenfield sites.



*Statutory authority under the City-Village Zoning Act does not exist, which requires a developer (as a precondition to site redevelopment activity) to document the need for, or measures to mitigate the impact of, building demolition.*



- **Concurrency** - Similar to impact fees, concurrency is a technique, which requires public facilities necessary to serve a development to be in place as a pre-condition to project approval.
- **TDR Program** - In a transfer of development rights program, a community identifies an area within its boundaries that it would like to see protected from development (the sending zone) and another area where the community desires more urban style development (the receiving zone). Landowners in the sending zone are allocated a number of development credits that can be sold to developers, speculators, or the community itself. In return for selling their development credits, the landowner in the sending zone agrees to place a permanent conservation easement on his or her land. Meanwhile, the purchaser of the development credits can apply them to develop at a higher density than otherwise allowed on property within the receiving zone.

The city should also consider supporting state legislation that increases the supply of affordable housing in the state. Particularly important is the establishment of increased funding for profit and non-profit organizations to build new affordable housing units.

### 12.2.9 - Master Plan Evaluation and Amendment

Michigan's Municipal Planning Act was amended in 2002 to require that planning commissions review their master plans at least every five years to determine whether to commence the procedure to amend the plan or adopt a new plan. These regularly scheduled plan reviews will make it necessary to determine how plan effectiveness will be measured.

### Measuring Plan Effectiveness

The process of preparing a comprehensive master plan requires both effective processes and a practicable set of recommendations. Therefore, plan effectiveness should be judged upon both its planning processes and by its outcomes.

- **Grading on Process** - The way in which land use decisions are made should be measured. The master plan process established a new way in which the community can be involved in determining land use priorities on a citywide scale. An evaluation of how the community is involved in land use discussions, and the influence these discussions have on the decision-making process, post-plan adoption should be reviewed.
- **Grading by Outcomes** - Outcomes can be compared against the *intended* consequences of the plan; they can also compare the *unanticipated* consequences of land use decisions. This evaluation should include what has been learned in trying to achieve the objectives of the master plan and what should be changed.

Outcome- and process-based evaluations are not mutually exclusive. Each must be used to accurately report on the success of the plan and to determine what adjustments might be appropriate. It is recommended that the City Planning Department prepare an annual report on Master Plan implementation progress and as a means to gauge the level of consistency between plan objectives, city policies and community engagement. Below are listed two tools that would be useful in this evaluation.

One tool to evaluate the effectiveness of plan outcomes for the Master Plan is the Action Plan - Theme Comparison (Figure 12.b - Action Plan - Theme Comparison - Page 167). Master Plan objectives were orga-

Figure 12.b - Action Plan - Theme Comparison (Master Plan Objective(s) Addressed by Action Item\*)

Action Plan Items	 Great Neighborhoods Chapter 3	 Vital Business Districts Chapter 4	 A Strong Economy Chapter 5	 Balanced Transportation Chapter 6	 A City that Enriches Our Lives Chapter 7	 A City in Balance with Nature Chapter 8	 Partnerships Chapter 9	Application/Comments
Information and Outreach	GN1, GN3, GN4, GN5, GN6, GN7, GN8, GN9, GN12, GN13, GN14	VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE4, SE7, SE8, SE9	BT1, BT4	EOL2, EOL3, EOL4, EOL6, EOL7	N1, N3, N4, N5	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	Authorized activity of Planning Commission pursuant to Section 11, State of Michigan PA 285 of 1931, as amended.
City Department and Program Action Priorities	GN2, GN4, GN5, GN6, GN7, GN8, GN9, GN10, GN11, GN12, GN13, GN14	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE6, SE7, SE8, SE9	BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5, BT6	EOL1, EOL2, EOL3, EOL4, EOL5, EOL6, EOL7	N1, N2, N3, N4, N5	P1, P2, P3, P5	Strategic planning advocated as a means to develop short-term actionable steps in support of long-range planning that are assignable and trackable. Review to confirm if supportive of sustainable development - actions that create efficient infrastructure, protect and enhance quality of life, and strengthen local economies without injuring future generations. Review of Land Division Act (PA 288 - 1967) for replatting and redevelopment projects and the Condominium Act (PA 59 - 1978) for development standards applicable to detached single-family condominium developments.
Zoning Ordinance Text and Map Audit and Update	GN1, GN2, GN3, GN4, GN7, GN10	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7	BT1, BT2, BT4, BT5, BT6	EOL1, EOL2, EOL4, EOL5, EOL6, EOL7	N3, N4	P1, P2, P4	New zoning techniques are recommended that can respond to the major themes offered by the Plan. Floating zone, overlay zone, incentive/bonus zoning, Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) District regulations and typology coding are recommended approaches.
Guidelines Workbook	GN2, GN3, GN7, GN8, GN10, GN11, GN12	VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE1, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6	BT1, BT3, BT5, BT6	EOL2, EOL3, EOL4, EOL5, EOL6	N3, N4	P2, P4	Guidelines fill the gap between general plan policies and more specific of zoning requirements.
Neighborhood and Area-Specific Plans	GN2, GN3, GN4, GN5, GN7, GN8, GN9, GN10, GN13	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE1, SE2, SE4, SE5	BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5, BT6	EOL1, EOL2, EOL3, EOL5, EOL6	N2	P1, P2, P3, P4	Neighborhood/area-specific planning provides a finer grain of analysis than is available via a citywide master plan. Used to increase citizen technical capacity and attract investment.
Citywide Studies	GN1, GN2, GN13		SE2	BT1, BT3, BT6	EOL2, EOL3, EOL5	N3, N4	P1	Authorized by Section 3 of State of Michigan PA 285 of 1931.
Design Assistance Center	GN2, GN3, GN4, GN7, GN8, GN10, GN12, GN13	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD4, VBD5	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE7	BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5	EOL1, EOL2, EOL3, EOL5, EOL6, EOL7		P3, P4	A DAC, often an independent organization, provides technical assistance on design issues and facilitates consensus planning and design solutions with developers, property owners, neighborhood and business organizations and the city. The DAC could play an important role in the preparation of neighborhood and area-specific plans.
Capital Improvements Program Development	GN7, GN8, GN9, GN10, GN11, GN12, GN13	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD5	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE6, SE7	BT1, BT2, BT3, BT4, BT5, BT6	EOL1, EOL2, EOL3, EOL4, EOL6, EOL7	N2	P1, P3	Planning Commission involvement required by Section 9 of PA 285 of 1931 after Master Plan adopted. MMFOA development process recommended, along with departmental program plans.
State Legislation	GN2, GN8, GN9	VBD2, VBD3	SE4, SE7	BT3, BT5	EOL5	N2	P1, P2	Seek new or expanded authority for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conservation areas</li> <li>• design review</li> <li>• impact fees</li> <li>• concurrency</li> <li>• transfer of development rights</li> <li>• demolition approval</li> </ul>

\* Letter/numerical code references specific planning objective (found in chapters 3-9) addressed by Action Plan item.

Continued on next page

Figure 12.b - Action Plan - Theme Comparison (Master Plan Objective(s) Addressed by Action Item\*)

Action Plan Items	 Great Neighborhoods Chapter 3	 Vital Business Districts Chapter 4	 A Strong Economy Chapter 5	 Balanced Transportation Chapter 6	 A City that Enriches Our Lives Chapter 7	 A City in Balance with Nature Chapter 8	 Partnerships Chapter 9	Application/Comments
Growth Management Program	GN1, GN4, GN5	VBD1, VBD4	SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7	BT1	EOL1, EOL2	N1, N3	P1, P2	GVMC Metropolitan Development Blueprint amended by Blueprint II including “produce a voluntary regional planning process that functions at local level.”
Economic Summit	GN1, GN2, GN3, GN4, GN5, GN6, GN8, GN9, GN10, GN14	VBD1, VBD2, VBD3, VBD4	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7, SE8, SE9	BT1	EOL1, EOL2, EOL4	N1, N2	P1, P2, P3, P4	Refer to Southern Wayne County Chamber of Commerce Economic Summit as regional model.
Master Plan Evaluation	GN1–GN14	VBD1–VBD5	SE1–SE9	BT1–BT6	EOL1–EOL7	N1–N5	P1–P6	Requirement of Section 8a(2) of State of Michigan PA 285 of 1931(Municipal Planning Act) for Planning Commission to review plan at least every 5 years.

\* Letter/numerical code references specific planning objective (found in chapters 3-9) addressed by Action Plan item.

nized around seven themes (see Chapter 3 through 9). The matrix reveals how each Action Plan item impacts the objectives developed for each theme. It is recommended that periodic review of approved and denied projects, master plan amendments and zoning ordinance changes placed before the Planning Commission, City Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals include consideration of this matrix to evaluate decision making consistency and plan implementation progress.

City planning objectives and policies will likely change in the years ahead in response to unexpected events and in consideration of new information not yet available. It is recommended that new objectives be compared against Action Plan items as they are created to determine if additional implementation measures are warranted.

**Planning Rating Form** - A simple way to quickly review a master plan using a rating form has been suggested by the Michigan Society of Planning as part of their Master Planning Workshop (a sample rating form is presented in Supplement A-6). Participants first reach agreement on the evaluation categories to use, then evaluate whether the plan successfully re-

sponded to each category or failed to address a particular need or issue by scoring each category against a numerical scale (100 being a high score and 0 representing a low score). An “overall” score is also provided to evaluate the adequacy of the existing plan. The need to amend the plan is based upon its municipal score predetermined by the group.

### Amending the Plan

As the Master Plan is evaluated, it may be necessary to amend the Plan. The Planning Commission may amend, extend, or add to the Plan at any time, following the procedures as set forth the Municipal Planning Act. (The procedure is shown in the Municipal Plan Approval diagram in Supplement A-4.)

Plan amendments can be initiated in several ways:

- a major private sector development proposal is received by the community that was unanticipated;
- new information (i.e., U.S. Census data, regional transportation plans, etc.) is received which forces a re-evaluation of plan assumptions and recommendations;

- storm events and similar catastrophes such as fires force property redevelopment decisions;
- activities of other governmental agencies or authorities such as major infrastructure projects or development occurring “across the border” force reconsideration of plan recommendations; and/or
- petitions from community-based organizations or boards are presented.

Plan amendments can also be made at the discretion of the Planning Commission to reflect an extension, addition, or revision in terms of topical area, geographic coverage or level of detail. The preparation of neighborhood/area-specific plans are an example of this (refer to *Chapter 11 - Area-Specific Plans - Page 151*).

When an amendment is anticipated, it is recommended that the Planning Commission include the plan amendment in an annually adopted project priority list (supported by a resolution of concurrence from the City Commission). This project priority list will serve as the work plan for the next year and should contain only those tasks that can realistically be accomplished based on the availability of time, money, labor, and a thorough review of need.

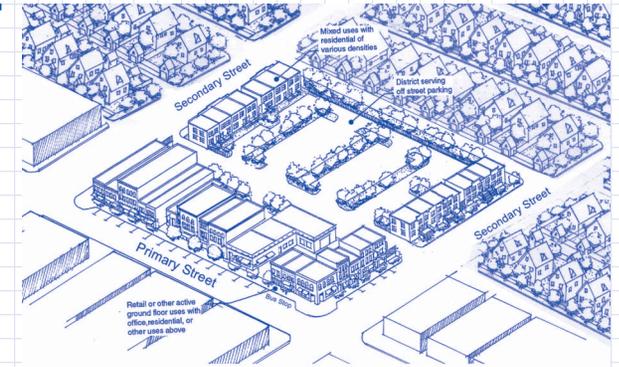
## 12.2.10 - Guidelines Workbook

There is growing acceptance and support for local design guidelines and design review by the development community. Guidelines help fill the gap between the general planning policies of site planning and zoning requirements. Sample design guidelines have been provided as part of the Master Plan (refer to *Chapter 10 - Development Character - Page 117*) to illustrate their value in guiding and coordinating private investment decisions. The Master Plan recommends that these samples be used as a starting point

in preparing a comprehensive design guidelines workbook for addressing neighborhood character types and business areas. This Action Plan item should also determine how such guidelines would be applied in the future.

Guidelines may be advisory or mandatory<sup>3</sup>. They may be used to communicate the community’s urban design objectives and/or they may be incorporated into the zoning code as development regulations. Certainly, design guidelines will have a greater influence on the character of development if they are mandatory and administered as part of a site plan or design review process. Any design review process must be fair and consistent. The following elements are usually incorporated.

- A “users guide” that answers most of the common questions about content, process and timing.
- A “pre-application conference” to review community expectations, proposed concepts and establish a framework for resolving problems.
- Opportunities for public comment on the proposed development and its consistency with the guidelines.
- Staff analysis to describe how the project does or does not meet the design criteria. A checklist can be useful in this analysis (An example is contained in *Supplement A-7*). In some cities, staff makes a decision in their capacity as an administrative official; in others, a recommendation is referred to the Planning Commission as part of the site plan review process.
- An appeal process that allows an aggrieved applicant, or a citizen opposing a project, to challenge the staff or Planning Commission decision. Specific criteria for gaining a waiver of guidelines should be identified to expedite the review and approval process, and to distinguish unwarranted appeals.



Traditional Business Area - Project Detail

<sup>3</sup> The ability for local units of government to regulate aesthetics can be traced to a U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Berman v. Parker*, 348 U.S. 26 (1954)). Language in the case supported the concept that public welfare is a broad and inclusive term and that it is within the power of the legislature to determine that a community should be beautiful. Later, the U.S. Supreme Court (in *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. New York City*, 438 U.S. 104 (1978)) recognized “that states and cities may enact land use regulations or controls to enhance the quality of life by preserving the character and the desirable aesthetic features of a city...”



## Criteria for Successful Economic Development\*

Success can also be predicted based on the following economic development criteria.

- Long-term political and community leaders with the patience and perseverance to nurture a plan over time.
- A clear sense of the possibilities scaled to the place, and a marked sense of “optimistic realism.” These will keep doubters at bay in the critical early stages.
- A vision articulated in a way that captures the imagination of the community.
- A strategic plan for implementing the vision. It is important to have a tactical game plan as well as a compelling goal – dreams fade when no visible action exists.
- A management entity that can “act” and take responsibility for implementing the plan. Most cities have term limits for elected officials, making it imperative to have an organization that will ensure continuity.
- Early successes that can enhance the community’s ability to maintain a sense of momentum. Realistic first targets and an integrated marketing program help to set a sustainable pace.
- Borrowed successes. Link the plan to initiatives already underway (i.e., streetscapes, transport systems or marketing programs) to accelerate the sense of achievement.
- Funding through a variety of sources. The dream should be realizable to a certain degree when taken in smaller steps that can be financed quickly.

\*Robert Gorman and Nancy Egan, “Revitalizing Little Rock,” *Urban Land*, September 2001, page 11.

## 12.2.11 - Growth Management Program

The success of the City of Grand Rapids’ planning program will depend upon its ability to constructively interact with neighboring communities and state and federal agencies. Fostering improved alliances will be critical to advancing the recommendations contained within the Master Plan. Perhaps one of the best ways to respond to issues between units and layers of government is through local and regional cooperation.

Grand Rapids is served by three such organizations. They are the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC), the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission, and the Urban Redevelopment Council of the Right Place Program.

In 1994 the Grand Valley Metro Council released the *Metropolitan Development Blueprint* report which recommended redirecting growth and development in compact centers of economic activity and livable communities framed by a network of greenways and open lands. Blueprint strategies included:

- complete an inventory of natural assets;
- design a transit system based on Blueprint concepts;
- define current employment centers/locate future centers;
- review water/sewer utility services and the way they serve land use patterns;
- devise ways to encourage compact/livable communities;
- create sub-regional alliances to address issues.

Three additional goals have recently been added. Collectively referred to as “Blueprint II,” they are:

- produce a voluntary regional planning process that functions at the local level;

- promote Blueprint principles within the local political process;
- equip metropolitan communities with effective tools for evaluating regional decision-making.

It is recommended that the GVMC in association with the West Michigan Strategic Alliance (WMSA) work in concert to champion regional “Smart Growth” initiatives, which respond to the impacts of sprawl.<sup>4</sup>

## 12.2.12 - Economic Summit

The future success of Grand Rapids is not only tied to regional land use planning issues, but to maintaining regional economic vitality. In 2000, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation released the results of a study prepared by the Anderson Economic Group pertaining to business climate and site selection criteria - tax rates, fees, regulatory burdens, utility costs, wages, business costs and other government burdens. Grand Rapids ranked No. 1 in terms of profitability for manufacturing and service firms.

It is recommended that community leaders continue to address these and other criteria by holding an annual Economic Summit to address on-going regional issues affecting private investment divisions. The Right Place Program, the Urban Redevelopment Council and Sustainable Business Forum (along with other interested stakeholders) might champion the event. Its design should incorporate an extensive outreach effort to involve neighborhood organizations and businesses that mirror the process used to create the Master Plan. An example model they should consider is an annual economic forum designed by the Southern Wayne County (Michigan) Chamber of Commerce.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The WMSA is a volunteer collaborative effort by local governments, businesses, institutions, and private citizens, established in 1996 and created to develop a 25-year strategic vision for Western-Michigan. This process, called the “Common Framework” is intended to lay the groundwork for the greater Grand Rapids, Muskegon, Grand Haven and Holland area to plan as a region.

<sup>5</sup> The Southern Wayne County economic forum called the Downriver Summit, is a strategic planning process involving the public and private sectors directed toward identifying critical community needs and finding the resources necessary to achieve them. Four working committees have been formed to focus on Quality of Life, Workforce Development, Economic Development, and Infrastructure issues.

## 12.3 - Overcoming Barriers to Implementation

Institutional barriers may limit the effectiveness of plan implementation. The Grand Rapids community is well positioned to meet these challenges in the years ahead, provided it commits itself to the recommendations of the Master Plan.

### Building Government Trust

The Master Plan has been drafted based upon a model of public collaboration. Additional information and outreach efforts are planned as an Action Plan implementation strategy to build public trust and a commitment to meet planning objectives.

### Complexity of Interests

A robust community such as Grand Rapids has many public agencies and private organizations with competing priorities, responsibilities and viewpoints. Advocates also bring diverse viewpoints to important community decisions.

Grand Rapids has an established infrastructure of neighborhood and business organizations, regional councils and a history of joint decision-making that has recently produced dramatic results. These include, for example:

- collaboration between the City, Grand Rapids Township and Plainfield Township in planning for the future of the East Beltline corridor;
- regular participation of neighborhood and civic organizations and regional agencies in important land use decisions;

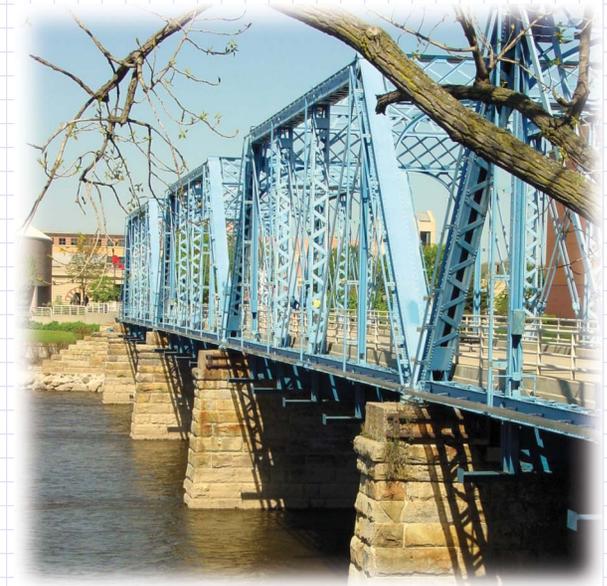
- collaboration between the cities of Grand Rapids and Walker in exploring the potential for a sustainable business park in the industrial area located west of US-131 and south of I-96;
- participation in regional transit planning and operations through the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP);
- participation in the GVMC's Urban Metro Committee to develop a subregional plan; and
- participation in GVMC's Metropolitan Transportation Planning Committee's activities as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Building upon these achievements by initiating a Regional Growth Management Program and Economic Summit will be critical to the Plan's success.

### Communities Must do More with Less

Communities can no longer rely on state and federal governments as major funding sources. Faced with unfunded mandates and a shrinking labor force, local governments find they must compete with more attractive private sector positions in finding and retaining qualified personnel. Thus, less money and fewer people are available to carry through on plan implementation activities.

In response, regional funding options and public-private partnerships are being pursued with increased vigor to carry out planning objectives. Continued conversation in this regard through a forum of an annual Economic Summit will help to focus dollars where they are most needed.



*This former railroad bridge was converted for pedestrian use over the Grand River in Downtown Grand Rapids.*



While traditional households with school age children no longer comprise the majority of the households in the City of Grand Rapids, the goals of the Master Plan cannot be fully realized unless parents with school age children perceive viable education options in the city.

### Tyranny of Urgency

The accelerated pace of society and the growing diverse demands of constituency groups often traps local officials into spending their time solely “putting out fires,” not on long-range planning needs. This can lead to a feeling of frustration over not being able to meet long-term goals and gain a sense of accomplishment.

The City Department and Program Action Priorities implementation strategy addresses this predicament directly by linking the city’s 3-Year Strategic Plan with master planning efforts.

### Lack of Technical Capacity

The Master Plan has emphasized the importance of urban design as a critical factor in the development of Grand Rapids. The Action Plan recommends that GVMC explore the potential of establishing a Design Assistance Center and Design Guidelines Workbook to increase the technical capacity of the metropolitan region to respond to future design issues facing the community.

### Leveling the Playing Field

Often, governmental policies do not support the efforts of local communities to remain competitive or to enact local regulations designed to preserve local community values. Research shows that many policies adopted since World War II at the federal, state, and county level have created a system of overt and hidden subsidies whereby urban communities subsidize suburban communities. The Action Plan recommends new state legislation be enacted that contributes to growth management and affordable housing supply efforts.

### Balancing Individual Property Rights with Community Interests and Goals

The essence of community, especially urban community, is that the best life for all is achieved when individual rights are balanced with the interests of the community. Aristotle taught that the individual could not reach his or her highest development outside a relationship to the city. Rigid ideological commitments to individual rights at the expense of the community, or the other way around, will impede the implementation of the plan. A balance must be sought.

*“...we must turn to the first question of political philosophy: Is it the role of government to promote individual rights while defending the common good, or to promote the common good while defending individual rights?”*

*From Suburban Nation: The Rise and the Decline of the American Dream*

### Schools

While traditional households with school age children no longer comprise the majority of the households in the City of Grand Rapids, the goals of the Master Plan cannot be fully realized unless parents with school age children perceive viable education options in the city. Charter schools and parochial schools can supply this need to a point, but a thriving public school system is an essential criterion for full implementation of the Plan. The crisis of the urban public school is not unique to Grand Rapids. The city must be accountable to working in concert with the public schools to realize the goals of the Plan. At the same time, the city and its citizens must demand accountability from the school administration, unions, parents and students.

The Action Plan recognizes the importance of monitoring the consequences (anticipated or unintended) of interrelated actions by prescribing that a formal Master Plan evaluation process be adopted as an on-going practice of the city.

## City Staff Coordination

It is essential to involve city staff at all levels to understand and implement the Master Plan. Day-to-day cooperation among city officials is essential to its success. The Action Plan advocates that formal coordinated points of information exchange continue through the CIP process, the strategic planning process, and the on-going review of city policies that support the Master Plan.

## Misperceptions and Prejudice

Race and socioeconomic status continue to influence personal property investment decisions and affect locational choices for industry and home ownership.

A critical Action Plan activity is information and outreach. This on-going activity of Master Plan education can help to reinvigorate a decision-making process based on shared interests and common issues of concern.

## Auto State

Some of the recommendations of the Plan, such as viable transportation choices and traffic calming could be perceived as a challenge to the automobile. This perception is not necessarily reality. There is a growing recognition that sole reliance on the automobile as a transportation option is not a sustainable strategy for the future of a city like Grand Rapids

The Action Plan recommends that we make the case that viable transportation options are a contribution to the long term economic viability of the region through fixed-route transit planning.

